

Masters of Dzogchen As Personifications of Dzogchen

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In the light of our discussion of embodied Being as self and self as embodied Being, I would like to focus on our understanding on the Naturalistic Dzogchen Praxis by focusing on some of the Dzogchen Masters of the Natural Divinity of Human Experience of Self and the Divinity of Appearance of Phenomena. I will focus in some detail on Padmashambhava who is the symbolic function of the Primordial Guru and is the great continuous living source of Dzogchen.

Padmashambhava : Personification of The Primordial Guru

Padmashambhava appeared in Tibet around 8th century. It is said that Padmashambhava personified the Dzogchen teachings. Padmashambhava personified the primordial guru in human form. Padmashambhava was a person of mystery and existentially symbolic. Padmashambhava's name symbolized living within the world without being enslaved by its vicissitudes, without being captured, and contained in the context of his mind alone and circumstances. He was self-liberated within his existence just as he was and as he is.

Padmashambhava lived within the luminous spaciousness of freedom of awareness, and within the trans-lucidity of the radiance of awareness as the great expanse of awareness, which is Being itself. His path of freedom was living in the Openness of spaciousness and the trans-lucidity of radiance, and not within the detachment of depersonalization, and the disengagement of dissociation. His love of personhood personifies the Dzogchen view. The Dzogchen view is the who-ness of Being. The who-ness of humanness. The nature of primordial awareness is who-ness.

Padmashambhava was free of subjugation to patriarchal domination and free from the illusion of the One who knows absolutely. He lived naturally in the sea of Being and in the sea of sensation. He lived in relational life and he would destroy what and whomever had to be destroyed to protect the innocent.

Padmashambhava understood that the essence of Compassion was the protection of the innocents. Compassion is not mere sentiment, compassion is the dramatic action of protection of the suffering of the innocents.

Padmashambhava lived within the space of freedom and action during the wild events of the 8th century. Some think he came from Pakistan and others think he came from Iran and others think he came from places which were gnostic in praxis. Most believe wherever the place, the place of his origin was a country where the gnostic views of light were vital and alive. He was not an Indian and he was not a Tibetan. Padmashambhava played a great role in the bringing forth of Dzogchen teaching and skillful Dzogchen methods into Tibet.

His thought was gnostic in that he understood and experienced human awareness as the power of knowing awareness as open spaciousness, and as the open radiance of light. This power of spaciousness and radiance of light is the source of human freedom and human self-liberation. Padmashambhava understood that humans are beings of light. The process of the experiential embodiment of light and the experience of one's own Being as light, is the source of self-liberation.

Padmashambhava lived and understood that the luminous knowing of primordial awareness was our innermost sense of self. The self was not the self of mind alone, the conceptual mind but the innermost, experiential knowingness of direct perception, direct experience and direct awareness. Our innermost awareness is our inner self. Innermost luminous awareness is the authentic self of the human person. As the Dakini said to Dudjom Lingpa You and I are indivisible. There is a you and there is an I, and there is our indivisibleness. This understanding teaches that we can experience dualistic beings within the context of non-dualistic Being. And we can experience within non-dualistic Being, dualistic beings.

Direct luminous perception as gnosis was for Padmashambhava the natural path of self-liberation. Self-liberation arises through our self-awareness and our self-recognition of what is already present within us as us. To experientially know who we are in essence, is to experience the who-ness of Being itself. Awareness is no thingness. Being is no thingness. Who-ness is no thingness.

Padmashambhava lived in the realm of the Siddhas and where ever he was located, the Siddha Realm would become manifest in completeness. He would

suggest that wherever and whenever he was present, he invoked the Dakini Realm (feminine archetypal form) and the archetypal Dakini Realm would become manifest and embodied in that place, in that location. He was the master of manifestation and invocation. His expression of the Vajrayana was shamanistic and inclusive of the power of the invocation of the light and the invocation of the archetypal dimension of existence.

Padmashambhava would speak from within his own experience of the field of Being in a most direct and poetic manner. His language communicates the felt sense of his experience of the field of Being, and is rich in symbolism which is existentially dramatic. He gives a poetic and imaginative view of the subtle luminous universe of spiraling light and energy. This light and energy is experienced both in the relational world of ordinary life (Nirmanakaya) as well as the archetypal (Sambogakaya) elemental realms expressed and personified as the Deities and Dakinis. His awareness lived within the luminous Dharmakaya dimension which is the dimension of pure potentiality, within which everything and anything manifests. His awareness lived within the Sambogakaya dimension with its archetypal energies and luminous vortices.

Padmashambhava's awareness also lived in the ordinary life world and his awareness was limitless and unbound by phenomena. His awareness penetrated everything and anything. His awareness penetrated every place and any place. He was universal Being expressed in singularity. This is one of his own favorite descriptions of human beings. "Universal Being expressed in singularity." Padmashambhava lived in actuality of Being.

Padmashambhava describes how we emerge from within the Dharmakaya and dissolve back within the Dhamarkaya. And that we reemerge again and dissolve again; and then again reemerge, and again dissolve. Padmashambhava knew directly and taught the indestructibility of human awareness. He taught the unfolding experience of living life after life and death after death. He planted his teachings within his students who would be reborn in future times when such teachings could be understood and lived. Today is such a time. His abiding existential understanding is this who-ness, and through this who-ness we are manifesting, and we bring forth who-ness life after life and death after death. His

confidence is that in essence we are unborn and undying. Human awareness is the unfolding infinity of immortal personal existing-ness.

He had the awesome power of extending the field of radiant luminosity and vital energy in boundless dimensions. He had the power to both dissolve and liberate demonic forces through the extension and emanation of his field of light and energy. This dissolving of demonic energies was one of his specialties. He and His Beloved Companion Yeshe Tsogyal created the praxis of the Vajra Kilaya. The cutting through practice that dissolves obscurations and limiting conditions and situations. He lived in union within the luminous companionship of his beloved Dakini. His life was one of sacred companionship.

His visionary experiences are of an apparitional nature, wherein his experience is of luminous subtle vortices that are beyond the logical and linear objectifying rational mind. There is no superego encapsulating and containing Padmashambhava. He was magical in his use of the power of invocation of the luminous archetypal energies and radiant light. He lived in all three dimensions of Being simultaneously.

Human being-ness is the center of his understanding and his literary work, in a form of the ageless mystical humanism within the context of luminous Gnosticism in which everyone and anyone is the Divine light of Pure Being. Everything and everyone is light. All events are the unfolding of the radiant light.

Padmashambhava's expression and his understanding are distinctly a gnostic understanding in which human beings are radiant light and who have rational minds. He had great love for the natural power of jnana or direct knowing as unbounded gnosis and he understood that everyone has this innate nature of primordial awareness and the capacity for the power of invocation of the sublime radiant archetypal energies. For Padmashambhava, everyone has this capacity of seeing, of gazing. This is the Togel praxis. Through gazing we experience the nature of Being, the nature of Infinite Reality. Padmashambhava was not a 'as if person.' Padmashambhava was not ambivalent. Ambivalence obscures the unfoldment of Radiant Awareness.

Mystical Humanness

Our humanness emerges out of this innate potentiality. We are manifested from this primordial ground awareness. This primordial ground awareness is both space and radiance. This primordial awareness is also energy, and the luminous resonance of compassion. For Padmashambhava, compassion was not a sentiment, but sublime generative action of the radiant light of the inner heart essence that liberates beings from endless suffering. Compassion is both benevolent and fierce. Compassion is both creative and destructive. Compassion both stands with, and stands against.

Compassion is the light of the moon as well as the light of the sun. Compassion is the self-manifestation of the transmission of light from one person to another; or to a group of persons or to a situation. A person's capacity of compassion arises from their experience of timeless awareness in time. This capacity allows one to transmit the light of awareness to a person's past and to the person's present momentum and to the person's future. We naturally live in timeless awareness and in time simultaneously.

This manifestation is not of our mind alone but rather, primordial awareness is manifesting everything and anything, including our minds, our bodies and our subjectivity as awareness itself. This dynamic potential expresses itself in living symbols, living icons of trans-lucidity. Everything is within this symbolic translucent realm of Being. The world is symbolically Open and Translucent. The dynamic world is Luminous Openness of Phenomena and the ceaseless unfolding of events of phenomena.

The experiencer is not mind alone, such as our mind of thinking, feeling, sensation, memory or fantasy. The ego logical self as mind is emergent from within this large field of awareness itself which is manifesting in time and space. Our awareness is multidimensional and simultaneously beyond time and beyond space. We are timeless awareness and we are timeless awareness in time.

Snying Po

Padmashambhava named the drama of self-liberation as *Snying Po* which means sheer intensity or individuated energy or the creative force of vortices. This is

similar to what Jung called psychic energy or psyche and the gnostics called Pleroma, the fullness of no thingness or the no thingness of fullness. This is also the kundalini shakti of the Shavites. Padmashambhava focuses on the subtle body of light or sphere of light that we are. Meditative practice brings forth the body of light, the luminous elemental-ness.

The great translator and philosopher Herbert Guenther suggests that Padmashambhava's teaching is luminous, mystical Gnosticism in which we can experience the unfolding of elemental-ness as the universe and as pervasive divinity. Herbert Guenther's book Padmashambhava is for myself the greatest book on Padmashambhava next to Yeshe Tsogyal's most beautiful text.

The following understanding is greatly influenced by Guenther's magnificent book. Some of the wording and some of the language is Guenther's language. The dynamics of this "intensity" manifest through human experience, and all forms and all symbols are of a luminous radiant quality. The universe is radiant light energy. As experiencers, we are already luminous beings living in the immediacy of these universal energies of three dimensions of Being. We live in the ordinary world of Being as this luminous sensuous nature as place and space. The immediacy of sheer experience is found nowhere else but within our daily experience, and within the ever present translucent symbolic reality of all that is.

The symbolic reality is not only psyche but is the archetypal configuration of actualities that are present in us. We enter in them and them in us.

Padmashambhava's teachings are free of rationalistic legal thought, and he often characterizes the human person as the little man who is the wholeness of self - manifesting light. The primordial field of ground awareness manifests as individual fields of brilliance and radiance.

Padmashambhava's understanding that the human person is the cosmic whole self-manifestation of the light in singularity. The self-arising of light within the person breaks apart cognitive somatic frames which hold spiritual pursuit as the beliefs of the representational mind. Belief is not knowing and knowing is not belief. The self-arising of light destroys representational thought and replaces belief (both personal and cultural) with a profound unbinding and unbounded experience. The intensity of the radiance can be fragmenting, and the mind as well as the body seem to be falling or breaking to pieces. As person we are

stretched somatically as we become the embodiment of luminosity. Our psyche is stretched beyond your rational containment into the vast sphere of non-conceptual luminous knowing.

Through the unfolding intensity of the radiant light of awareness, the vast light of luminous openness as the innate core of all, is manifested and revealed . The unfolding of the light is the revelation of the innate guru or the innate Buddha awareness which is infinite in its horizon, vast and multidimensional.

This unfolding of awareness brings a person into existential authenticity and this authenticity is manifested with immediacy and suddenness. *The totality of that which exists is without exception radiant light.* From within the fragmentation of personality of mind alone, authenticity arises and becomes the organizer of the personality.

The wholeness of intensity/energy becomes a vortex of light. The light expands and appears as a Bindu to us and as circles of light. The light is both within the person and suffuses everything through and around the person. The primordial ground of Being is the ground of unbound radiance and unbound spaciousness. The primordial ground of Being is the ground of gnosis, jnana or yeshe, knowingness as light. Self- illumination is a difficult experience and is beyond a person's comprehension. This experience is beyond words and beyond language and cannot be thought.

This means the totality of all that is, is indivisible and undetermined. There is a ceaseless spontaneous non conceptual happening that is opening and shining, self- illuminating and radiating, giving and manifesting everything and anything.

The cosmological whole's intensity/energy becomes luminous vortices of radiance giving birth to thoughts and language and to human meaning. The self-illuminating experience of awareness goes beyond many spiritual paths by the brilliance, radiance, naturalness and the intensity of direct knowingness.

Within this personal experience of manifestation of cosmological whole and intensity energy there is no judgement as to fault or virtue. There is no judgement as to wrong or right, and no judgement as to truth or falsity. Non judgement does not mean being without the discrimination of direct perception or gnosis. Situational reality is the manifestation of ultimate reality.

Awareness itself fragments us and breaks us, self illuminates us, and liberates us. For Padmashambhava, there is this vast luminous field of knowingness beyond our contained mind. The sense of being located in mind alone can feel like being contained and in a bound solipsistic box. This is forever painful. The light of awareness can break through us, breaks us open, and we are terrified at the vastness of the unfolding light.

Through the dissolving of our aversion to the luminosity, the experiential emergence of the awareness field happens and the brightness emerges as unbound completeness and the abyss of darkness dissolves. This is the inner meaning of Dzogchen as the Great Perfection or great completeness.

The elements are light, and the elemental-ness as light is also the gnostic understanding and experience. Elemental-ness is central to Padmashambhava's work. From the view of elemental-ness everything is alive and moving and translucent. There is the relentless unfolding of the trans-lucidity of Being as awareness, and Being as the trans-lucidity of appearance. The world is animistic. The universe is luminous psyche. As Jung once said, "we do not have psyche we live in psyche."

Padmashambhava created and taught methods for gazing into the light of phenomena. He was a master of Togel, (the gazing) leaping into the light. The gazing methods of Togel bring a person into the completeness of self-luminosity. Our mind is not the source of liberation. The mind is a box that can be opened to the infinite field of light. The experience of the light is both the source and the result of self-liberation.

Padmashambhava also taught us how to cut through phenomena or open up phenomena, open the form of phenomena to experience the light of phenomena, the luminous Being of Phenomena. The same light of our awareness is the same indivisible light that manifest phenomena and the form of phenomena. This is Trekcho. The light of phenomena is the luminosity of events, the intensity of events, and the radiance of Being manifested through events. The form of phenomena can and often hides the light and radiance of phenomena. The form of phenomena hides the Being of the phenomena.

Padmashambhava also taught us how to invoke and bring forth the Sambogakaya dimension into our experience. The power of the archetypal dimension can

permeate our experience of our self and our ordinary life world. We all have this power of invocation. As Dudjom Rinpoche, who in prior life time during the 8th century was an original student of Padmashambhava would say in his prayer 'Calling the Lama from Afar', please take this power of invocation in your own hands.

Padmashambhava understood that the human judgmental mind with its dichotomizing activities directs a person to take positions opposing the complexity of reality. The focus of rational consciousness narrows our experience of reality, limits the depth and breathe of experience within the mind's narrow rationalistic thinking. The mind cannot apprehend the nature of awareness and the mind cannot apprehend the radiant luminosity of Being's manifestation of the infinity of phenomena. The mind does not know Being and cannot know the Being-ness of Being. The mind can apprehend the details, particularity and singularity of forms. The mind can apprehend difference within forms and between the forms. Awareness experiences Being and the Being-ness of beings. Awareness is the light of the knower, experiencing the radiance of the light of phenomena, the light of appearance.

The Unfolding History of Dzogchen

In the 11th century in Tibet the great Dzogchen Master and Scholar Rongzom Chokyi Zangpo wrote the beautiful text *Establishing Appearance As Divine*. This great phenomenological text was written in Tibet as many Indian monastic Buddhists were fleeing India and immigrating into Tibet. The Dzogchen text focuses on the light of primordial awareness manifesting all phenomena as light, just as the same light manifests our own personal awareness .

With the great influx of Indian Buddhist immigrants, this period of time was beginning of formulation of the New Translation Traditions in Tibet. These traditions were Karma Kagu, Drikung Kagu , Saka and in time the Gelupa tradition. These New Translation traditions were continuously committed to the Tatagarbha understanding of the Uttara Tantra . The Dzogchen tradition was already well established and deeply grounded in Tibet when the Indian Buddhist immigration flooded into Tibet. The differences between Dzogchen and Mahamudra lineages was both implicit and explicit. This difference continues

through to today. The difference is the essential difference between the transcendental path and the path of immanence.

Many of the new translations lineages and traditions challenged the validity and integrity of Dzogchen. The new translation lineages challenged the authenticity of the Dzogchen traditions. They did not think Dzogchen was reflecting Indian Buddhism in many fundamental ways. The view of the New Translation traditions and lineages was transcendental. Dzogchen was the path of Immanence and the path of the Embodiment of light. Dzogchen was the path of awareness becoming aware of awareness and then integrating our mind within awareness. This is the path of non-duality of Being within the duality of being and the duality of beings within the non-duality of Being. This is the alchemical process of self-liberation.

For Dzogchen the nature of appearance was radiance and the path to self-liberation was embodiment of the light and attunement to the light. Appearance is the path of radiance and resonance, and not simply a delusion or distraction from the Purity of Being. Our light of own awareness becomes indivisible within the light of phenomena. This is illuminating, and liberation through the light of experience was described earlier. (Padmashambhava).

The Nyingma Dzogchen tradition in Tibet had gone beyond the 4 and 5th century Indian Buddhist Uttara Tantra traditions of the Tathagatagabha. The actuality of phenomena and the path of phenomena or path of appearance is a recurring philosophical praxis issue in Tibetan Buddhism. The New Translation traditions are also challenged seriously around the reincarnation of a single same person appearing and disappearing life after life, death after death. The challenge arises out of the Dzogchen understanding of the indestructibility of human awareness as our human self-incarnating life after life and death after death. This creates for the non-self or Anatman views of the new translation traditions difficulties. The New Translation traditions tend to be stuck in the Uttara tantra epoch, describing no self or who-ness existing, and yet a single same person appears again and again through reincarnation.

The terma tradition of Padmashambhava challenges the New Translation tradition because a person, as the continuous field of awareness, lives life after life. And the very same person manifests these terma teachings life after life. Self-liberation is the experience of the embodiment of light of awareness and not

simply the entry into a dissociative transcendental state. The power of radiance of the light of awareness is challenging to the New Translation traditions located in solely in emptiness and nothingness.

This difference remains between Nyingma and New Translations remains to this day. Even today students are told by some New Translation teachers that Dzogchen is dangerous.

Longchenpa: A Existential Phenomenology of Being

Longchenpa was the great Dzogchen master of the 14th century. He wrote in the context of a Phenomenology of Being as Awareness. Longchenpa wrote many texts about the ontological field of our personal human awareness . For Longchenpa human beings are the intertwining of self as Being and Being as self. Longchenpa in his philosophical presentations of Dzogchen integrated a phenomenology of Being within his phenomenology of Dzogchen. Longchenpa also integrated Dzogchen into the historical dialectical drama of philosophical Tibetan Buddhism.

Longchenpa understood that human awareness as self, is unborn and undying and that we will live life after life and death after death as embodied beings of Light. Awareness is not a thing. Awareness is Being's knowingness. Longchenpa presented Dzogchen as the natural and sublime path of self- liberation through the existential realm of immanence. Although he did not use this exact language, Longchenpa understood human beings to be onto- ontological beings. His work is deeply phenomenological in that he shifts his understanding from being in mind alone, into entering into phenomenological understanding and experience of direct awareness or direct knowingness of Being . He languages the experience of the nature of Being in Tibetan language and symbols . His writing is freed from patriarchal reification of the authoritarian, transcendental, philosophical and political structures of the New Translation schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Je Mirpham : Being and Pantheistic Knowingness

Mirpham was one of the great 19th and early 20th century Dzogchen philosophers in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. Within Mirpham's unfolding understanding of Dzogchen there is a further deepening shift from a transcendental path and view,

into the praxis of self- liberation as a path of immanence of non- duality within duality, and duality within the field of non-duality. The path of Una Voce. All beings are the self-manifestation of Being. All appearance are Divinity and all experience is the manifestation of Divinity.

He wrote explicitly on the Divinity of all experience and all phenomenological appearance. He wrote on the Divinity of our experience of self as the Divinity of Being in the world. He elaborated the experience of our self as Divine Radiance of Light in the Divine World of Luminous Appearance. Mipham makes explicit the Pantheistic field of Being as the field of our human existence, as the field of world and as the field of the universe. Our inner most self is a manifestation of field of Pure Being as Radiance. He brings explicitly in the Nyingma tradition the understanding of Buddha Nature as Pantheism. Buddha Nature is Pantheism embodied.

Dudjom Lingpa : Knowledge as Luminous Action

Dudjom Lingpa was also a 19th century Nyingma Dzogchen Master. He was the creator of the Dudjom Lineage. Here is a statement from Dudjom Lingpa:

Human beings within awareness can know the nature of phenomena. Human beings within awareness can know the nature of the Being of phenomena. This awareness is not a mental mind cognition.

Experiencing the self-manifestation of appearance within our experience of our awareness is self- liberation. This is the eye of Prajna. In the action of this experience of becoming aware of awareness, the mind drops back. The actual realization of the nature of phenomena is free of mental analysis. This is the place where the Buddha abides. This is the sole path of the Buddhas of the future which you will embark upon, and now you have given yourself personal freedom.

The clear light of experience and the radiant light of appearance reflects the manifestation of primordial awareness of luminous basic space shining forth the bindus of light that are the primordial ground of original purity, pure from the beginning-less Beginning.

The vast array of clear light without obscuration is white, since it is perfect it is yellow, since it is free of attachment it is red, since it is not sought after it is green and since it is without limitation or constriction it is blue. Awareness is unspoiled by the fixation of the intellect on mental events is able to see the vivid clarity of true knowing and true perceiving.

The Unfolding of the Transition from Mahamudra into Dzogchen

There is a vast transition from the Uttara Tantra into the epoch of Great Perfection of the Divinity of all phenomena and Divinity of all experience. Indian Buddhism came into Tibet and began formulating Tibetan traditions reflecting Indian Buddhism such as Karma Kagyu, Drikung Kagyu, Sakya and Gelupa. As these traditions were being formulated many of these traditions remained within the epoch of the Uttara Tantra which is the understanding of Buddha Nature as seed of potential in all sentient beings. Arising out of this Uttara Tantra are various forms of Mahamudra.

Most of these New Translation traditions remain in the transcendental path of Buddhism. These new translation traditions often could not accept the pantheistic understanding of the Nyingma Dzogchen traditions. They continued to experience the illusion of appearance and the deluded-ness of appearance and the deluded-ness of experience. They taught the Mastery of Mahamudra. They teach the transcendence of phenomena and transcendence of mind even to this day. These traditions are monastic in their orientation. They focus on liberation through cessation.

Dzogchen Praxis and Mahamudra Praxis are not the same Praxis

These New Translation traditions like to say Dzogchen and Mahamudra are the same. They are not the same path of self-liberation. There are different paths to self-liberation. They are different in regards to the actuality of phenomena as the manifestation of light. There is the Mahamudra Transcendental path of detachment and dissociation and then there is the Dzogchen Path of Immanence which is the path of absorption and embodiment of luminosity. The Dzogchen path is liberation through circumstance. The transcendental path is the ancient

monastic path of transcendental liberation from the world. The path of immanence is the contemporary path of self- liberation within the world as the field of Being.

There is an established Interface between the teachers of Padmashambhava 's Dzogchen and the teachers of Kashmir Shavism during the 8th and 9th centuries. The Shavite masters declared a theme close to the heart of Dzogchen *“The Bliss of Samadhi is the Bliss of the world. And the Bliss of the World is the Bliss of Samadhi”*. And as the Shavite Yogi Swami Muktananda would so often say *“ God dwells within You as You.”*

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Reference

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